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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 000645

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR NEA/FO, NEA/ELA

ALSO FOR P FOR DRUSSELL, RRANGASWAMY

DRL/NESA FOR WHITMAN, BARGHOUT

USUN FOR WOLFF/GERMAIN/SCHEDLBAUER

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PARIS FOR RWALLER

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [LE](#) [IS](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: LEBANON: GEAGEA ON ELECTIONS, SECURITY, AND CABINET FORMATION

REF: A. BEIRUT 634

[B.](#) BEIRUT 639

[C.](#) BEIRUT 644

Classified By: Ambassador Michele J. Sison for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

SUMMARY

[11.](#) (C) In a June 9 meeting with the Ambassador, Lebanese Forces leader Samir Geagea hailed March 14's victory in the June 7 parliamentary elections (Ref A) as a "big manifestation of democracy in the Middle East." Satisfied with the outcome of the results, Geagea said March 14 must now move away from "campaign mode" and begin focusing on rebuilding the country. Security remains a concern to Geagea, who expressed the need to replace the current head of the military intelligence (LAF G-2), BG Edmond Fadl, with someone stronger. On cabinet formation, Geagea was confident that March 14 would be able to form a new government soon. He said that the best support the United States can provide at this time is to stay quiet during the cabinet formation process and to avoid the perception that the United States is meddling in discussions. End Summary.

ELECTIONS AFTERMATH

[12.](#) (C) The Ambassador, accompanied by the DCM and PolOff, called on Samir Geagea at his office in Maarab June 9. Geagea advisors Elie Khoury and Joseph Nehme also attended the meeting. Geagea, well-pleased with the election results, hailed March 14's victory as a symbol of democracy in the region, stressing that it is now time for the country to "dig itself out of the trenches of the resistance" and begin rebuilding itself. "We should, as March 14, meet up soon to discuss," he said, "but we have old scores that need to be settled first." Geagea expressed satisfaction with the content of Hizballah SYG Hassan Nasrallah's June 8 speech (Ref B), describing it as a "democratic speech" that could set the pace for positive developments in the near future.

[13.](#) (C) Noting that Christian voters determined the results of

the elections, Geagea opined on what caused the Christian voters to sway towards March 14. He explained that there are a plethora of factors that could have caused this phenomenon to occur, but believed that Free Patriotic Movement leader Michel Aoun made a strategic mistake by aligning with Hizballah. Historically, the Christians have been aligned with the state, noted Geagea, explaining that Aoun's decision to ally with Hizballah instead of with President Sleiman or the Patriarch caused March 8 to lose the majority in the elections.

¶4. (C) When asked about possible parliamentary blocs, Geagea predicted that President Sleiman will not have his own parliamentary bloc, and that independent parliamentarians will sway toward either March 8 or March 14. He was confident that Marada movement leader Sleiman Franjiyah, whose party won three seats in Zgharta, would remain aligned with March 8, while Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri will stay where he is with Hizballah.

MUST REPLACE MILITARY
INTELLIGENCE HEAD

¶5. (C) Geagea was pleased with the performance of the security forces during the elections, highlighting the minor incidents of violence throughout the process. However, he said that he is still concerned about the army, explaining that if there was not a political will for peaceful elections, the army could not have done their job on June 7. Geagea told the Ambassador that in his view, current head of

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the military intelligence (G-2), BG Edmond Fadl, was weak and must be replaced with someone stronger. He compared the current attitude of the army to how it was under Syria's rule, describing a recent incident where opposition forces attacked one of Geagea's convoys while the army stood by and watched. (Note: This is not the first time Geagea has criticized Fadl, who had not been his first choice as G-2. End note.)

CABINET FORMATION

¶6. (C) Geagea told the Ambassador that he is confident that March 14 would be able to form a new government soon, but believes it will take longer than Future Party leader Saad Hariri's estimated two weeks (Ref C). He foresees that the future cabinet will be split, with 10 ministerial positions belonging to March 8, 17 belonging to March 14, and three belonging to the president. He explained that it would be "reasonable" to give the Interior Ministry and the Defense Ministry to the president, while the Justice and Finance Ministries would belong to March 14.

¶7. (C) Geagea complained to the Ambassador about the statements from Washington officials in the press on the U.S. administration's alleged desire to replace the current Hizballah-allied foreign minister Fawzi Salloukh. (Note: A June 9 As-Safir newspaper article had such a report. End note.) Geagea said that we must avoid the perception that the United States is interfering in the cabinet formation process, and should not be seen as requesting the replacement of Salloukh. There are certain key "sovereign" ministries, which include the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), and taking the MFA away from March 8 will cause it to request another "sovereign" ministry that has more practical importance, according to Geagea. "Salloukh is harmless to us," he added, "and we are better off if he remains in place instead of us giving March 8 another ministry, such as justice."

SISON